



## Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit

Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service

455 Emerson Street

Craig, Colorado 81625



May 29, 2009

To: Agency Administrators and Fire Management Program Files

From: NW Colorado FMO, Mark Rogers

Subject: 2009 Fire Management Plan and 2009 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

The issuance of the 2009 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and ensuing agency-specific guidance has created some inconsistencies in our current Fire Management Plan (FMP) for the Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit. These differences are predominantly concerned with terminology and planning processes and should not change the way we manage fires on the Unit.

The previous three types of planning processes included Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA), Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) and Long Term Implementation Plan (LTIP). The Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) will now be used as the planning tool for all unplanned wildland fires. The WFDSS text version is currently available for use as is the web-based version, although the web version continues to be constructed, with refinements and improvements being added. The web version will likely continue to change and improve throughout the 2009 fire season.

As of the 2009 Policy issuance there will now be two types of wildland fires, planned (prescribed) and unplanned. Unplanned fires may be managed for protection objectives (suppression strategies in the past), resource benefit objectives (wildland fire use in the past) or a combination of both. And the objectives for a fire may change over time and space as the fire situation and conditions change. As our fire management plan is currently written, fires in A and B polygons will be mainly managed for protection objectives. Fires in C and D polygons may be managed for protection objectives, resource benefit objectives, or both. A few B polygons contain Appropriate Management Response (AMR) language, which could result in some consideration of resource benefit strategies, but for limited acreages as set forth in the plan. The goals, objectives, constraints, and desired vegetation conditions listed for each polygon in the FMP will guide our decisions for the type(s) of management and strategies we employ on any given fire.

Throughout all the agency-specific documents and guidance, there have been three items emphasized as key elements to accomplish this change to the new policy. They are:

1. Review resource management plans and fire management plans to ensure it's understood where fire can be used to meet resource objectives, NEPA documentation is adequate and environmental clearances are completed.
2. Ensure understanding of terminology, revised direction, and policy implementation changes are coordinated and communicated with 1) State and local governments; 2) resource and emergency stabilization and burned area rehabilitation program leads; and 3) other internal and external cooperators.
3. Review and revise as necessary agency-specific and interagency geographic area and unit-level agreements and operating plans.

The Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit has accomplished, or is well on the way to accomplishing, these three items. For Item 1, most of our units have been managing fire for resource benefits for a number of years and the new policy should not affect these practices. The units that haven't had this management option in the past will continue to utilize protection objectives for their fires until their resource management plans are amended to allow for other management options (ie. resource benefit fires). Item 3 has been addressed mainly through the county Annual Operating Plans that are in place as well as our Interagency fire management plan and a few other inter-governmental agreements that we have. Item 2 has at least been initiated for this season, and is moving along fairly well. This will no doubt be an on-going process for at least the next several years as we learn more about the various nuances involved with the new policy, especially the WFDSS program, and are then able to share this information and learning with those we are involved with.

The new 2009 fire policy should not change how we manage fire on this Unit. Unit's that have managed wildland fire use events in the past, as we have, will be fairly comfortable with the new planning programs and processes (WFDSS), whether that be the text version or the web-based version. And we have very positive and solid support from the State or Regional Offices for all our agencies and the fire management unit. As we progress through the upcoming season, if you have questions, concerns or suggestions with the new policy, WFDSS, or our fire management program over all, please don't hesitate to give me a call.

/s/ Mark Rogers, FMO  
Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit